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FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2499
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5745
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RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8146
RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 6635
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 8094
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1567
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 0423
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 5401
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 1433
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RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 6960
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 003456

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/05/2031

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: DPP SHIFTS CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM INTO LOW GEAR FOR
NOW

REF: TAIPEI 03394

TAIPEI 00003456 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: AIT Acting Director Robert S. Wang,
Reasons: 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: After reviewing and debating various constitutional revision proposals, some of which dealt with sensitive sovereignty issues, the ruling DPP's Central Executive Committee (CEC) on October 4 decided to continue discussion of constitutional revision during its next meeting in early November. While the November meeting will focus on the choice between presidential and parliamentary forms of government, the DPP also plans to continue internal discussions on competing drafts of the first six "sovereignty" articles of the Constitution. A leading DPP legislator told AIT he does not expect the party's legislative caucus to support sovereignty changes. End Summary.

¶2. (C) At a meeting on October 4, the ruling Democratic Progressive Party's CEC reviewed various constitutional revision proposals but was unable to reach agreement on a draft. After intense debate produced no resolution between competing drafts, some of which touched on sensitive sovereignty issues (reftel), the CEC agreed to revisit constitutional reform at its next meeting early next month. Lo Cheng-fang, deputy director of the constitutional revision team, told AIT that the proposal to slow down the party's constitutional revision effort was introduced by Presidential Office Secretary General Mark Chen, who was supported by Premier Su Tseng-chang and Taipei mayoral candidate Frank Hsieh. According to DPP International Affairs Director Winston Dang, the CEC members understood that since the party was now in power, it must act more responsibly toward the Taiwan people and the international community, especially the U.S., than it had in the past when, as an opposition party, it inserted pro-independence positions into DPP documents.

¶3. (C) Dang said the November CEC meeting will focus "only" on deliberations between the two original constitutional

revision drafts, one presidential and one parliamentary, which do not propose changes to the first six sovereignty articles. Lo said, however, that the party will first decide on which government system to endorse before moving on to tackle competing versions of the sovereignty articles. He added that it would be "natural" for the sovereignty issue to continue to be debated within the party. According to Lo, there are now four draft versions of the constitution's sovereignty articles, ranging from one that keeps the wording of the current constitution intact to a version that changes the national title to "Republic of Taiwan" and redefines the national territory as the islands controlled by Taiwan.

¶4. (C) In a separate meeting on October 5, DPP Policy Committee Director and legislator Eugene Chao said he did not expect the party, especially the party's legislators, to support changes to the constitution's sovereignty articles. Chao noted that the debate on sovereignty had been sparked by an independence movement "elder" and reflected the views of only a small number of people, not the younger and more pragmatic party members. DPP legislators, who will have to compete for swing voters in the 2007 elections, do not want to be identified with radical independence causes that could cost them their seats, Chao stressed.

Comment

¶5. (C) Yesterday's decision by the DPP to set aside sovereignty issues and focus on government structure in its initiative to produce a constitutional reform proposal is a positive development. The decision reflected, in part, DPP concerns about strong U.S. reactions as a result of the immediate and firm public statements issued by the State Department in response to President Chen's September 24

TAIPEI 00003456 002 OF 002

speech. It is not clear at this point, however, whether the decision to set aside sovereignty issues is temporary or will turn out to be more long-term. Clearly, the DPP's constitutional revision effort is a topic that will continue to merit the closest monitoring.

WANG